

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Advocacy Priorities 2024

Surf Coast Shire: Living sustainably in an area of environmental significance



This advocacy prospectus showcases the opportunities available in Surf Coast Shire.

Advocacy priorities are grouped in five themes:

- Housing affordability and key worker accommodation
- Climate resilience
- Prosperity and creativity
- Environment and sustainability
- Stronger communities and places

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar as the Traditional Owners of the skies, land, waters and sea country across our municipality.

Snapshot

Population:
37,694
(2021 Census)

Population by 2033:
49,774
(via Remplan)

Growth rate P/A:
3.8%

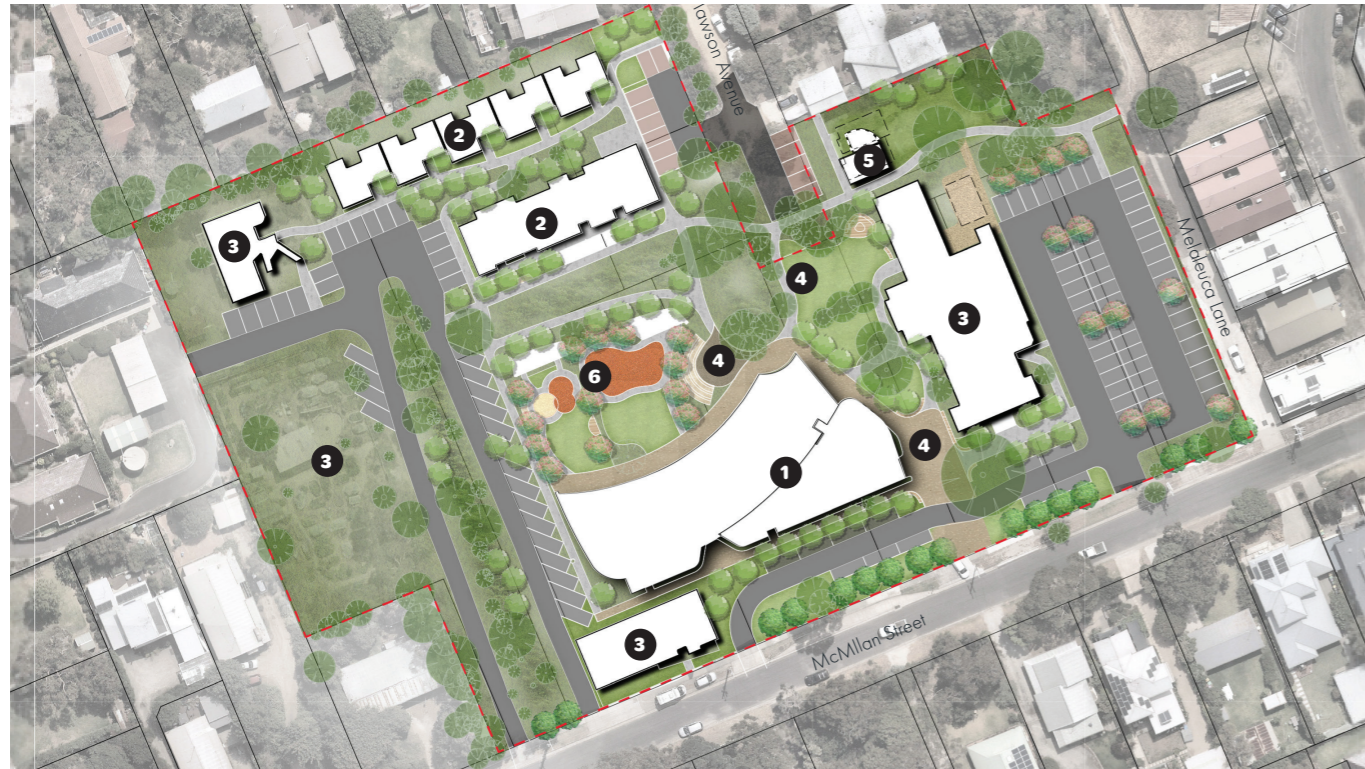
Size:
1553 square kilometres

Median age:
43

Townships/Localities:
35

Employment:
12,576 jobs

Advocacy theme: Housing affordability and key worker accommodation



Accessible, affordable, and secure housing is critical to the wellbeing of our communities and is a key enabler of economic growth.

However, housing is in short supply and house prices have increased significantly. For renters there are very few options as a high proportion of landlords choose to let properties for short term stays, rather than long term occupancy, especially in tourism destinations. In 2021 Council declared a key worker accommodation crisis in recognition of the extent of the problem.

Workers cannot afford to live near their jobs. They are either travelling greater distances to work or simply choosing to work elsewhere, putting local businesses in jeopardy, and leaving communities short on essential roles.

Secure housing is out of reach not just for tourism and hospitality workers but people in traditionally higher paid roles including teachers, health workers and emergency services personnel. There is a flow on effect in local sport clubs, community organisations and CFA and SES brigades, as new and younger members, can no longer live near enough to participate.

The challenge has been exacerbated by unprecedented growth in net migration to Surf Coast Shire – accelerated by the pandemic and supported by lifestyle changes such as increased flexible working policies.

Topographic constraints limit the ability to increase housing supply. Coastal townships such as Lorne, Aireys Inlet and Anglesea about the Otway Ranges, one of the highest bushfire risk zones in Australia. The Distinctive Areas and Landscape (DAL) declaration in Torquay limits future growth in the shire’s largest town.

Existing rent assistance and social housing programs don’t apply as many key workers are above the income threshold for existing assistance programs.

Policy changes that address affordability in the context of low supply and high prices are required. Interventions will need to address local context, including scale and built form and overlays such as the Bushfire Management Overlay.

Funding that supports delivery of local projects, will both add supply, and demonstrate the benefits of well-designed alternatives to traditional local housing forms.



Headline priority: Anglesea Community and Health Hub

DESCRIPTION:

Integrated hub in McMillan Street Anglesea incorporating multi-use community spaces, housing, health and medical facilities. The project will co-locate services and facilities and provide much needed key worker housing in a central Anglesea location.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Estimated total development cost is \$40 million. Council contribution up to \$3 million.



Headline priority: Social and affordable housing at Fraser Drive Aireys Inlet

DESCRIPTION:

Development of social and affordable housing at the site of existing social housing units at 2 Fraser Drive, Aireys Inlet. Council has appointed national not-for-profit housing provider, Housing Choice Australia to co-design the project alongside a community advisory group.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Funding support to construct the project. Costs to be confirmed following completion of co-design process.

Selected other priorities:

- A review of Victorian planning controls related to short-term accommodation to help mitigate the impact short stay rental is having on housing affordability and long term rental availability.
- Certainty that revenue raised through the Victorian Government’s short-stay property tax is spent equitably in the areas where the tax is raised, noting the large number of short stay rentals in regional locations.
- An adjustment to the Victorian Government’s Second Dwelling provisions announced in late 2023 to ensure such dwellings can only be used for long term occupancy, and not short stay rentals, in areas where there is an acknowledged shortage of key worker and affordable accommodation.
- Mandated affordable and social housing in developments of a certain size, including a review of definitions to ensure key worker accommodation is included.
- Funding criteria that supports development of social and affordable housing projects at a scale compatible with regional communities, where developments cannot be delivered at the size required for them to be profitable to housing providers.

Advocacy theme: Climate Resilience



Surf Coast Shire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 in recognition of the existential threat climate change poses.

Climate change is being experienced through more extreme weather, including flood events, extreme heat and catastrophic bushfires. Impacts are profound, including loss of life, the destruction of homes and public assets and physical and mental health conditions.

Surf Coast Shire is particularly susceptible to such impacts being one of the highest risk bushfire zones in Australia. Flood, drought, and coastal erosion and inundation are additional risks.

Climate change mitigation remains a critical priority but adaptation, with a focus on more resilient communities and infrastructure, is equally important.

Funding programs that ensure infrastructure meets the demands of extreme heat, rainfall, tide and storm surge and fire, will be increasingly important for communities in high-risk zones such as Surf Coast Shire.

Grant funding for asset renewal is rarely made available to councils, much less for intervention to equip assets to better withstand climate change events. Yet preventative spending can save many times the cost of post-event recovery.

Asset renewal needs to accommodate current and future impacts and therefore be 'built back better' if the investment is to be meaningful over time. For new infrastructure, whole of life costs should be factored in at the planning and design stage. Elements that reduce emissions and energy consumption should be supplemented with design features that mitigate against higher temperatures, extreme rain and storm events, sea-level rises and bushfire.

Considered policy decisions are necessary to manage liability implications. A future where homeowners, and public authorities, are unable to secure property insurance at any price, must be avoided.



Headline Priority: Funding to improve climate resilience of public assets

DESCRIPTION:

Council is seeking funding support for infrastructure that is impacted by climate change. 97% of public spending is spent after a climate emergency, whereas intervention beforehand can reduce the impacts and save money in the long term. Extreme weather, and other climate related events, are occurring more frequently and the impact on public infrastructure is beyond the financial capacity of Council to manage.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

A suitably scaled funding program is required to support councils to manage public infrastructure in the face of climate change impacts. Funding should enable damaged assets to be rebuilt to a higher standard to avoid repeated damage and repair. Funding is also needed to proactively upgrade assets, such as drainage, to meet increased demands brought about by extreme weather events.

Headline Priority: Protecting the Karaaf Wetlands and supporting the Surf Coast hinterland

DESCRIPTION:

The Karaaf Wetlands have significant environmental and cultural value. Water is a scarce resource. Stormwater systems upstream of the wetlands feed into the Karaaf via a series of constructed wetlands and drainage pipes. High volumes of fresh water are detrimental to the ecology of the Karaaf and a missed opportunity. Council is working closely with Barwon Water on a scheme to divert the water away from the Karaaf and use it productively on agricultural land.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Funding to progress short and long term stages of the Council and Barwon Water scheme to ensure healthy rural landscapes and build a sustainable economy.

Headline Priority: An urgent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

DESCRIPTION:

Urgent action is needed at all levels of government and communities to address the climate emergency our planet is now facing. Action is required to achieve at least a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions before 2050.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

State and Federal government policies and initiatives that achieve these emissions reductions within the timeframes, or earlier.

Selected other priorities:

- Planning scheme changes that enforce more sustainable, climate resilient design in buildings and sub-divisions.
- Funding for catchment drainage studies and resourcing to support the development of Integrated Water Management plans.
- State level flood and inundation mapping combined with plans and policies to provide certainty about where to direct development.

Advocacy theme: Prosperity and creativity



The Great Ocean Road, which begins in Surf Coast Shire's largest township Torquay, is Australia's second most visited destination attracting six million tourists annually. Surf Coast Shire Council seeks to foster the concept of 'slow tourism' so that low-yield day trips are replaced with overnight and longer stays that offer a more immersive experience for visitors and provide meaningful support to local businesses.

An equally important need is to develop local economies that are sustainable year-round rather than dependent on a strong summer season to survive until next year.

One of the key drivers to achieve these aims is the proposed Surf Coast Cultural Centre - comprising a new, expanded home for the Australian National Surfing Museum, visual and performing arts spaces, library and office space for Surfing Victoria. The centre would serve as an anchor destination that encourages year-round and longer stays for tourists and a cultural facility and multi-generational life-long learning centre for locals. The development would also activate an underutilised public plaza in Torquay's Surf City precinct.

Co-location with other facilities and uses could be explored further through a precinct plan that considers the role this strategic location could play in Torquay's future, including how it could support housing demand.

Upgrades to Torquay Town Centre public areas would foster a town centre that is functional, vibrant and puts pedestrians first. An exploration of shared use options and built form would clarify the future role of the town centre, and encourage developments that are sustainable in the long term.

The beauty of the natural environment and the lifestyle it inspires are drivers of local economic activity. Workers are attracted by Surf Coast Shire's lifestyle, and flexible working options make the prospect of living and working locally more realistic. Data capacity and speed is a key enabler for growth in this sector.

Tourism is inextricably linked to Surf Coast Shire's natural environment. Visitor experiences that are complementary and protective of this extraordinary resource are the ones we seek.

Highlighted Priority: Surf Coast Cultural Centre

DESCRIPTION:

Stage One: A new, expanded home for the Australian National Surfing Museum, combined with a new public library and office space for Surfing Victoria. Stage two includes a Multi Arts Centre comprising community led performing and visual arts spaces, as well as makers' spaces and rehearsal facilities. There is further potential to explore additional uses, including housing, within a broader precinct development project.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Funding to undertake precinct planning for the Baines Crescent precinct, which encompasses the cultural centre site and the wider Surf City development. A master plan that identifies public realm improvements and strategic land use within the site would inform public and private investment. A major opportunity is the option to explore housing provision within the precinct. Estimated cost for precinct planning is \$375,000.

Funding to deliver the project. Capital cost of stage one is estimated at \$40 million. Council has allocated \$8 million to the project.



Highlighted Priority: Torquay Town Centre revitalisation

DESCRIPTION:

The Torquay Town Centre remains the primary retail precinct in Surf Coast Shire but upgrades are required to ensure it is a viable commercial and social precinct into the future. A public domain plan is the first step following which infrastructure improvements would be undertaken. An option exists to consider a broader precinct plan that incorporates housing. Shop top

living would add vibrancy, address housing supply and provide more sustainable housing options.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Planning work would cost an estimated \$275,000. Estimated cost of public domain capital works is \$15 million. Council has \$150,000 available to support the two precinct planning projects listed above.



Highlighted Priority: Surf Coast Trails

DESCRIPTION:

This project has two components: securing the future of the Anglesea Bike Park, which is currently located on privately owned land; and development of a mountain bike trail network with connections to other significant trail destinations in the region. A total of 36 new and upgraded trails will strengthen Anglesea's standing as a centre for mountain bike riders of all ages and abilities.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

The first stage of the mountain bike trail network is to undertake cultural heritage and vegetation assessments. Subject to positive findings, the project would then be investment ready. The trails component has an estimated cost of \$2.8 million. There is an opportunity to stage delivery of the trails so work can commence with less than the full funding.

The aim of the Anglesea Bike Park project is to secure a permanent home for the park given it is currently located on a privately owned site. Exact costs will depend on the specific site. Council has allocated \$500,000 to the Anglesea Bike Park component.

Selected other priorities

- Improved mobile and internet coverage with increased data capacity.

Advocacy theme: Environment and sustainability



The Anglesea landfill is near capacity, and whilst concerted efforts to reduce the volume of waste going to landfill, have extended its life, the forecast end date is 2027.

This local scenario will be repeated in communities Australia-wide unless we can address waste management in a new and holistic way. A collaborative, coordinated and environmentally responsible approach to recycling and waste management is required. Central to its success will be a commitment to a circular economy.

Complex systems require adequate funding to be well designed and sufficient investment in the solutions will be vital. Responsible, effective product and packaging stewardship will be a key component of the shift towards a circular economy, as will initiatives that promote behaviour change.

Design and delivery of infrastructure will also be part of the mix.

The natural environment is a key drawcard for residents and visitors in Surf Coast Shire. Endangered species and delicate ecosystems occur alongside rapidly growing population centres and drawcards like the Great Ocean Road which attracts six million visitors annually.

Natural resource extraction must be managed to ensure negative impacts are mitigated. Future measures to conserve and protect habitat will need to consider population growth including the implications for wildlife corridors.



Highlighted Priority: Circular Economy

DESCRIPTION:

Council is advocating for a collaborative approach to address waste management and the transition to the circular economy. This will necessitate coordination across all levels of government and engagement with the private sector. The waste hierarchy – Avoid, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Dispose must be adopted as the fundamental principle in managing waste.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Mandated producer responsibility and product stewardship schemes are required, bringing Australia in line with global best practice. This includes stricter stewardship of problematic materials including soft plastics, PFAS and textiles.

Consistent standards for recyclables accepted in kerbside collection are required to improve recovery volumes and compliance.

Funding for education and behaviour change initiatives, strategic waste planning and infrastructure is also required. This includes funding for landfill rehabilitation.



Highlighted Priority: Cessation of offshore resource exploration

DESCRIPTION:

Council calls for the cessation of off-shore resources exploration that pose high risks to our region. We passed resolutions to oppose the exploration and mining of unconventional gas within the shire in June 2015, and to oppose plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight in December 2018 as well as most recently to oppose the 2021 Offshore Petroleum Acreage Release and all new oil and gas exploration in the Otway Basin.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

The cessation of this type of exploration. This should be tied to a transition plan that brings renewable energy alternatives on-line, noting Victoria is the highest consumer of residential gas of any Australian state.

Off-shore resource exploration uses methods such as seismic testing which causes harm to marine life. Off-shore resource production poses a risk of catastrophic impacts on marine environments and coastlines. The continued use of fossil fuels contributes greenhouse gas emissions at a time when they need to be urgently reduced.

Advocacy theme: Stronger communities and places



Surf Coast Shire has experienced sustained, above-average population growth. The projected growth rate between 2021 and 2036 is 30.5%.

Surf Coast Shire is adjacent to Greater Geelong which is expecting a 40% increase in population, reaching close to 400,000 people by 2041. At the same time, the shire is a popular holiday and day-trip destination and populations in the west of Melbourne are within an hour's drive of Surf Coast. By 2033 an estimated 1.66 million people will live within an hour of Surf Coast Shire.

The community vision for Surf Coast Shire places particular significance on the environmental and cultural values of the shire. It also recognises that each township has a distinct character.

The ideal future is one where Surf Coast Shire townships are vibrant, livable, and sustainable and reflect the beautiful natural environment in which they're located. Car dependence would be reduced through public and active transport and precincts planned in such a way that services, facilities, jobs, and housing are co-located. Community participation would be enhanced through facilities that support

multi-use by multiple generations. Housing would remain accessible to local workers and successive generations and built forms would enliven activity centres.

As the level of government closest to community, Councils have valuable insights into local needs and aspirations. Equally, Council services and facilities regularly deliver on state and federal government objectives.

Effective partnerships enable all levels of government to provide support that is targeted, cost effective and aligned to local need.

Surf Coast Shire Council is seeking to ensure community services and infrastructure keep pace with a population growth rate tracking well above the state average. This is in the context of the rate cap, construction cost escalations and contractor shortages.

Council is seeking to collaborate on opportunities that put people and place together in ways that benefit both. Government policies, facilities and funding programs are critical drivers for the attainment of this goal.

Community Vision

From the hinterland to the coast, from the first peoples to the children of the future, we are an active, diverse community that lives creatively to value, protect and enhance the natural environment and our unique neighbourhoods. We will leave the Surf Coast better than we found it.



Headline priority: Funding for cycling links

DESCRIPTION:

Funding for actions identified in the Surf Coast Safer Cycling Strategy 2022-2027. High priority cycling corridors have been identified in consultation with community and stakeholders. The goal is to create practical, connected routes that encourage cycling in place of car travel and over time, build a holistic cycling network.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Investment in infrastructure on identified high priority routes, as detailed in the Surf Coast Shire Council Safer Cycling Strategy. This includes provision of safe cycling connections to key destinations within towns and through towns; improved crossings across busy roads; and region-wide connections between towns.

Headline priority: Deans Marsh Community Hall

DESCRIPTION:

The Deans Marsh Community Hall is a much loved facility in an ageing building. The aim of this priority is to ensure the hall meets community needs and complies with current building standards. A multi-use space and a daycare centre will be provided. The hall could also serve as an Emergency Relief Centre following bushfires and other emergency recovery operations.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Costs will be dependent on final scope and design. Council has \$2.5 million to contribute to the project.



Highlighted Priority: Funding criteria that support effective delivery

DESCRIPTION:

Grant programs that support capital project delivery are always welcome, but program criteria don't always reflect the logistics of project delivery. Timelines that cannot be met risk poor outcomes, either a comprised project, or non-delivery of essential infrastructure.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Grant criteria that include extended timelines for project completion, or the staging of funding to accommodate design and community consultation in the first year, with construction occurring from year two. Funding ratios that reflect the financial constraints rural and regional councils operate under.

Highlighted Priority: Advocacy support for key partners

DESCRIPTION:

Surf Coast Shire communities are richer thanks to the activities of many community groups, volunteer groups and organisations. Council has a commitment to enabling community groups and individuals to build their own capacity to deliver positive outcomes.

THE SUPPORT WE SEEK:

Policies and funding that support an enabling communities mindset. Eligibility criteria and funding ratios that ensure grant programs remain within reach for community based applicants. Programs and funding for key partners such as local libraries and health providers. Engagement with community that ensures local perspectives are reflected in government decisions.

Selected other priorities:

- Changes to the Victorian Planning Provisions that lead to greater recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Funding to support streetscape design and improvement works to enhance central Moriac.
- Funding of projects in Council's Social Infrastructure Pipeline and Community Projects program.
- Funding for active transport and road upgrades based on need and use criteria, rather than just crash data.
- Stronger provisions in the Planning Scheme to require developers to provide destination-focused active transport infrastructure in new subdivisions.



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